

Testimony Submitted to the Appropriations Committee:

H.B. No. 6824: An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June Thirtieth 2017,
And Making Appropriations Therefor And Other Provisions Related To Revenue.

Submitted By: Alyssa Cocce, Program Manager, The Kennedy Center

March 6, 2015

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Alyssa Cocce, Program Manager at The Kennedy Center. Our agency provides services for individuals with disabilities throughout their lives, supporting every facet of their lives. We are among the 500+ member agencies of the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits (CT Nonprofits.)

I would like to share my concerns with H.B. 6824, An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June Thirtieth 2017, And Making Appropriations Therefor And Other Provisions Related To Revenue. In particular, I wanted to express my sincere concerns to the funding reductions to The Kennedy Center Day Supports, Portability and Individual Budgets. These proposed budget cuts will directly affect the individuals that are currently receiving services in the program I supervise.

My program is a very specialized program. We provide services for individuals that do not fare well in a typical group setting for myriad of reasons including clinical/forensic concerns and mental health diagnoses. If not for funding provided by the state, many of the individuals I have worked with for years, would be unable to access their community, earn wages and live full lives. Many of us take grocery shopping for granted, but if not for appropriate funding and support, many of the individuals we support are unable to go to a store. Almost five years ago, we took a person to the store for the first time in his adult life. Imagine...48 years old and never having gone to purchase your own deodorant? Snack? Groceries? Without necessary funding, that individual would still be sitting in his bedroom.

The proposed cuts, coupled with four rounds of rescissions/budget modification dating back to late 2012, have put enormous pressure onto an already severely depleted system. The reality is that nonprofit providers have been pushed to our breaking point due to the lack of investment over the past two decades. Chronic underfunding has already forced many nonprofits to close, compete against one another for scarce resources, layoff employees, reduce benefit packages; altogether creating a win or lose system that weakens the entire nonprofit sector and threatens its sustainability.

As members of the Appropriations Committee work toward creating your 'Recommended Budget' for SFY16 and 17, I urge you to restore these harmful cuts to ensure critical programs and services are available to the residents of Connecticut. I'd also like to respectfully remind you that investing in the nonprofit sector will improve service delivery, increase economic activity, and save taxpayer money; a "win-win" for policymakers working to strengthen the economy, the nonprofit workforce trying to make ends meet, and most importantly, the clients and their families who count-on efficient, cost-effective, and high-quality services in our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, or for additional information.

Alyssa Cocce
Program Manager

Project PURPOSE
39 Lindeman Drive
Trumbull, CT 06611
(203) 332-4535 ext. 221
(203) 816-7536 mobile

The Kennedy Center, Inc.
“Celebrating the Potential of All People”